Purpose

The purpose of this guidance document is to clarify how *egg producers* keeping chickens for the purpose of producing *shell eggs* and *liquid eggs* for human consumption comply with the *enclosure* requirements of Chapter 13.8 (commencing with section 25990) of Division 20 of the [Health and Safety Code (Prop 12)](#) and [Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 1320)](#) of Division 2 of Title 3 of the California Code of Regulations (3 CCR, *Animal Confinement regulations*). The audience for this guidance is *egg producers* in California and *egg producers* outside of California who engage in *commercial sale* of *shell eggs* and *liquid eggs* from their chickens in California.

Mission of the Animal Care Program

To serve animal agriculture producers and California consumers by promoting and protecting the welfare and care of animals in agriculture in order for Californians to have access to food that is sourced from humanely and sustainably raised animals.

Key terms *italicized* in this guidance are described on Key [Terms for Stakeholders](#) guidance document.

For a description of all Egg Producer requirements to comply with Prop 12 and Animal Confinement regulations, click on link to [Egg Producer Guidance](#).

Enclosure Requirements

1. *Enclosure* shall allow hens to lie down, stand up, fully extend limbs, and *turn around freely*. (3 CCR section 1320.1.)

2. ***Usable floorspace* requirement**. Usable floorspace means the total square footage of floorspace provided to each hen and is calculated by dividing the total square footage of floorspace provided to the hens in an individual *enclosure* by the number of hens in that individual *enclosure*. (3 CCR section 1320(bb); HSC section 25991(s).)
   - This floorspace shall also include ground-space for *enclosures* that are outdoor pens or pastures accessible at all times by the hens confined in the *enclosure*. (3 CCR sections 1320(bb) and 1320.1(a)(2)(A).)
   - This floorspace shall include both ground-space and elevated level flat platforms upon which hens can roost but shall not include any perches or ramps. (3 CCR section 1320(bb); HSC section 25991(s).)

The majority of Cage-Free Housing Systems will fall into one of the three categories below for calculation of minimum *usable floorspace*:

- **Single-level all-litter floor systems bedded with litter** in which hens have limited or no access to elevated flat platforms, the *enclosure* shall provide a minimum of one and one-half (1.5) square feet of *usable floorspace* per hen. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(D)(iii); HSC section 25991(c)(3).)

- **Partially slatted systems in which hens have access to elevated flat platforms** under which manure drops through the flooring to a pit or litter removal belt below, the *enclosure* shall provide a minimum of one (1) square foot of *usable floorspace* per hen. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(D)(ii); HSC section 25991(c)(2).)

- **Multitiered aviaries in which hens have access to multiple elevated flat platforms** that provide hens with *usable floorspace* both on top of and underneath the platforms, the *enclosure* shall provide a minimum of one (1) square foot of *usable floorspace* per hen. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(D)(i); HSC section 25991(c)(1).)

- Flat platform means a constructed elevated horizontal surface (solid or slatted) above the *enclosure* floor.

- Flat platforms serve as an area for the hens to lie down, stand up, fully extend limbs, turn around freely, walk and rest.
  - The tiers in an aviary system are examples of flat platforms.

- If flat platforms are included in the calculation of minimum usable floorspace, hens must have continual access to the flat platforms while in the *enclosure*.

- Flat platforms do not serve the same purpose as a ramp.

3. **Nest boxes requirement**. The *enclosure* must have nest boxes which means a designated area for the hens to lay eggs. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(B); HSC section 25991(c).)
   - The nest boxes can be small enough for only an individual hen to access or can be a designated group nesting area.
   - The nest boxes can be completely enclosed with only a doorway to access, they can have an open top with four sides, or an open top with three sides.
   - Nest boxes are included in the *usable floorspace* of an *enclosure* when the hens have continual access to the nest boxes.
   - When nest box kickouts are enabled, the *usable floorspace* of an *enclosure* does not include nest box space.

4. **Scratch area requirement**. The *enclosure* must have a designated scratch area. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(B); HSC section 25991(c))
   - Scratch area means a portion of the *usable floorspace* that is solid – such as solid wood, cement, plastic, or dirt.
   - Scratch area can also be bedded with litter, but it is not a requirement to have litter for compliance with the scratch area requirement. If the scratch area is bedded with litter, then the scratch area can also fulfill the dust bathing requirement.
   - Scratch area allows the hens to display natural behavior of foraging, scratching the dirt for nail maintenance, and relief from slatted floors for resting.

5. **Dust bathing area requirement**. The *enclosure* must have an area that allows the hens to perform the behavior of dust bathing. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(B); HSC section 25991(c).)
- Dust bathing is when a hen crouches close to the ground while vigorously wriggling their bodies and flapping their wings to maintain feather and skin condition.
- Dust bathing materials can include a dry friable material such as dirt, dust, sand, or litter.

6. **Perches requirement**. The *enclosure* must have perches. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(B); HSC section 25991(c))
- Perch means an elevated surface that allows the hens to express the natural behavior of roosting.
- A perch allows the hen to rest above the ground and is the sufficient size to allow the hen to properly balance herself while roosting.
- Perches can be made out a variety of materials such as wood, metal, or plastic.
- There is no specific length of perches per hen required.

7. *Enclosure* shall be an indoor or outdoor controlled environment within which hens are free to roam unrestricted. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(A))

8. *Enclosure* allows the employees can provide care while standing within the hens' *usable floorspace*. (3 CCR section 1320.1(a)(2)(C))

9. If a hen must be separated from the rest of its flock, 1 through 8 requirements of this list are still required.

10. If hens are confined to a mobile coop, 1 through 8 requirements of this list are still required.

11. Exceptions to these *enclosure* confinement requirements (3 CCR section 1324.1):
- During examination, testing, individual treatment, or operation for veterinary purposes.
- During transportation.
- During rodeo exhibitions, state or county fair exhibitions, 4-H programs, and similar exhibitions.
- During slaughter.
- During temporary periods for animal husbandry purposes for no more than six hours in any 24-hour period, and no more than 24 hours total in any 30-day period.

Additional Animal Care Program Resources for Chicken Egg Producers

Egg Producer Guidance – Animal Confinement regulatory requirements for all *Egg Producers*.

Distributor Registration Guidance – *egg distributors* are required to register with Animal Care Program. Link to application for Distributor Registration.

Farmers' Market Guidance – for producers selling shell eggs, liquid eggs, whole pork meat, and whole veal meat at California Farmers' markets to comply with Animal Confinement regulatory requirements.

Eggs Covered Under Animal Confinement guidance document.

Sale Under Animal Confinement guidance document.

Additional External Resources for Chicken Egg Producers

United Egg Producers' 2017 Animal Husbandry Guidelines for U.S. Egg-laying Flocks: Guidelines for Cage-Free Housing

Association of Avian Veterinarians: https://www.aav.org/

American Poultry Association: https://amerpoultryassn.com/